

Social Relationships of Physically Challenged Institutionalized Children

Shaveta Bharti and Neeru Sharma

Post Graduate Department of Home Science, (Human Development), University of Jammu, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India

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ABSTRACT A sample of 10 children in the age group of 9-12 years was selected from an institution working for physically challenged children in Jammu with the purpose to assess their views about their relationships with their peer and their views about heterosexual relationships. The tools used were sociometry, interview schedule and incomplete sentence test. The major findings of the study were that all the children had good social relationships with their peer but there were few who needed guidance in this direction. All the children had a positive attitude towards heterosexual relationships. Sex stereotyped behavior was also shown by children.

INTRODUCTION

Physical disabilities often interfere with an individual's socialization and growth. Reduced physical mobility often prevents the individual from participating in many social and physical activities available to those without physical disabilities (Michel et al., 1990). As children's attitude towards peer with physical disabilities and behavioral control are significant predictors of their intentions to interact with children who had physical disabilities in the classroom and playground. But children without disabilities do not spend a large amount of time with their classmates with physical disabilities (Roberts and Smith, 1999). Many institutions offer specialized support to students with physical disorders. The special institution spatially separates the handicapped individual in the institution he learns a mode of communication and pattern of adjustment peculiar to the handicapped who share the same organ inferiority. Keeping these points in mind, the present research has been conducted with the objectives to assess the social relationships of physically challenged institutionalized children with their peer and their views about heterosexual relationships.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Description: A sample of 10 physically challenged children, both male and female was selected from an institution working for physically challenged children in Jammu, using purposive-sampling technique.

Tools for Data Collection: For data collection following tools were used.

1. *Sociometry:* It was self devised and was used to study the relationships of children with their peer. The sample children were asked to show their preferences for their peer on various tasks and situations.

2. *Interview Schedule:* It was prepared to generate data about background information of the child, child's relationships with his peer, his aim in the life and the facilitators.

3. *Incomplete Sentence Test:* It was self constructed and administered on children to get an idea about children's self-concept, heterosexual relationships and sex roles. The children were asked to complete sentences under these headings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study we found that majority of the children (70%) were males and 30% were females. 80% of them had congenital physical deformities and rest 20% became physically challenged after birth. 60% children joined the institution at the age of 9 years, 30% joined at the age of 8 years and only 10% children joined at the age of 10 years. The reason of their institutionalization was that children could get opportunities for their development.

After administering Sociometry, Sociomatrix (Table 1) was prepared and it was found that one child (10%) became the "Star" of the group as he was chosen again and again by other children. 30% children were "Co-Stars", their

Table: 1 Sociomatrix

Chosen	V	S	R1	R3	R5	G	M	R4	R2	H
Choser										
V		2							3	1
S	2		1				3			
R1	2	1					3		2	
R3	1		3							
R5	1			2				3		
G	2	1		1					3	
M	2	3		3					1	
R4	2								1	3
R2	3		2	2						
H			2	2					3	
1st choice	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	2	1
2 nd choice	5	1	2	1	-	-	-		1	
3 rd choice	1	1	1		-	-	2	1	3	1
Total	8	4	4	2	-	-	2	2	6	2

status was less secure than that of Star child and they could lose it. The children who were neither liked nor disliked were found as "Neglectees" (40%) because they were shy and withdrawn. Rest 20% children were chosen by none. Nobody preferred to talk and play with them. They were "Objective Involuntary Isolates" as the group actively rejected them. After making Sociogram it was found that 6 "Dyads" and 7 "Cliques" also existed. Results are also supported by the findings of Coie et al. (1982) that social behavior is a major determinant of peer acceptance. Popular children interact in a cooperative friendly way; rejected children behave antisocially, although neglected children engage in low rates of peer interaction, they are usually socially competent and well adjusted. On the other hand Varni and Wallender (1989) found that disability of an individual always interfered in his interactions with other which may lead to passive participation in different social activities.

After interviewing children it was found that the social interactions of these children are limited to the institution so they share things with their peer in the institution. Pro-social responses: friendliness cooperation, sharing and helping may be augmented by peer reinforcement and modelling (Mussen et al., 1984). But Roberts and Smith (1999) found that children without disabilities do not spend a large amount of time with their classmates having disabilities.

All the children were ambitious, all the sample boys wanted to become doctor, as they like to treat patients and inject 'syringe'. All the girls wanted to become teachers, as their teacher is their role model. All the children said their

parents would help in fulfilling of their aim.

Responses on incomplete sentence inventory revealed a positive outlook of these children towards heterosexual relationships. All the children in the present study were aware of their sexual identity, which according to Mussen et al. (1984) is one of the first and most important ways in which children define themselves.

All the boys in the sample responded that girls are good and beautiful, all the girls also perceived boys as good. Both perceive that they are appreciated and admired by the opposite sex. All the boys responded that they feel good when girls see them. Even all girls feel the same. Interactions with opposite sex peer are examples of gender-appropriate behaviors in the surrounding culture (Lloyds and Smith, 1985). While Sharma (1992) found that physical handicap is a crisis for which the victim has to suffer his helplessness. This crisis curtails the will power of an individual and disturbs his overall adjustment and confining to residential institution, the handicapped confronts further challenges in his individual and social life.

When inquired about sex roles attitude, it was found that all the children exhibited the stereotypes. As when reminded of kitchen the first person that comes to their mind was mother. All of them perceived that mother is the only person who performs work in the kitchen. All the boys said that girls play with doll, even girls said that they play with doll. Majority of the boys (90%) replied that they play with gun, while 10% replied they shoot with gun as they belonged to a border area where they had witnessed military actions being carried out quiet often. All the respondents said that most of the house hold chores are being done by mother and the sister usually assists her. They perceive that a female, especially mother is supposed to do the household chores. All the children showed sex-stereo-typed behavior. Similar views are held by Whiting and Edwards (1988) that in many cultures girls are given tasks such as food preparation, cleaning and baby-sitting that keep them close to the house and boys are given responsibilities that take them into the surrounding world.

CONCLUSION

All the children showed good social relationships with their peer. They had a positive

attitude towards heterosexual relationships. Children also showed sex-stereotyped behavior.

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